

**CLAIMS**

We claim:

1. An apparatus, comprising:

a call control component that sets a call category for a call to indicate that the call  
5 terminates at an announcement server component prior to connection with a called  
communication device;

wherein upon receipt of an answer message from the announcement server  
component, the call control component drops the answer message based on the call category.

2. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the call terminates at the announcement  
10 server component and the called communication device, wherein the call control component  
accepts an answer message from the called communication device.

3. The apparatus of claim 2, wherein the call control component drops the  
answer message from the announcement server component to prevent an initiation of billing  
for the call based on the answer message from the announcement server component;

15 wherein the call control component initiates the billing for the call upon receipt of the  
answer message from the called communication device.

4. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the call control component receives the call and sends a signaling message associated with the call to the announcement server component to involve the announcement server component on the call;

wherein the announcement server component plays an announcement for a calling  
5 communication device of the call and sends the answer message to the call control component, wherein the call control component determines to not process the answer message from the announcement server component based on the call category.

5. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the call control component receives the call and queries a home location register for an indication that the call will employ the  
10 announcement server component;

wherein the call control component sets the call category for the call based on the indication from the home location register.

6. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein a calling communication device initiates the call to the called communication device, wherein the announcement server component  
15 comprises a customized ringback tone component;

wherein the call control component determines that the call meets one or more customized ringback tone criteria set by a user of the called communication device and sets the call category to indicate that the call terminates at the customized ringback tone component.

7. The apparatus of claim 6, wherein the customized ringback tone component sends the answer message to the call control component and plays a preselected ringback tone to the calling communication device prior to answer by the called communication device;

wherein the call control component determines to not process the answer message to  
5 prevent billing for the call while the customized ringback tone component plays the preselected ringback tone to the calling communication device.

8. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the call control component determines to not update a billing record associated with the call based on the answer message from the announcement server component.

10 9. The apparatus of claim 8, wherein the billing record comprises an automatic messaging account billing record associated with one or more of the calling communication device and the called communication device.

10. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the call control component comprises a control subcomponent and a switching subcomponent, wherein the call category comprises a  
15 calling party category;

wherein the control subcomponent determines that the call terminates at the announcement server component prior to connection with the called communication device;

wherein the control subcomponent sends a call setup message to the switching subcomponent, wherein the control subcomponent sets the calling party category in the call  
20 setup message to a value that indicates that the call terminates at the announcement server component prior to connection with the called communication device.

11. The apparatus of claim 10, wherein the switching subcomponent employs the calling party category to determine whether to process incoming answer messages from the announcement server component;

wherein the switching subcomponent checks the calling party category and if the  
5 calling party category is set to the value that indicates that the call terminates at the announcement server component, then the switching subcomponent determines to not alert the control subcomponent of the answer message to prevent the control subcomponent from updating a billing record associated with the call based on the answer message from the announcement server component.

10 12. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein a carrier trunk supports the answer message between the announcement server component and the call control component, wherein upon receipt of the answer message from the announcement server component, the call control component employs the call category to determine to not initiate billing for the call based on the answer message.

13. A method, comprising the steps of:

setting a call category for a call to indicate that the call terminates at an announcement server component prior to connection with a called communication device; and

preventing an initiation of billing for the call upon receipt of an answer message from  
5 the announcement server component based on the call category.

14. The method of claim 13, wherein the step of setting the call category for the call to indicate that the call terminates at the announcement server component prior to connection with the called communication device comprises the steps of:

querying a home location register for an indication of whether the call will employ the  
10 announcement server component;

determining from the indication that the call terminates at an announcement server component prior to connection with a called communication device; and

setting the call category to a value that indicates the call terminates at the announcement server component.

15 15. The method of claim 13, wherein the call category comprises a calling party category, wherein the step of setting the call category for the call to indicate that the call terminates at the announcement server component prior to connection with the called communication device comprises the steps of:

determining that the call terminates at the announcement server component prior to  
20 connection with the called communication device; and

sending a call setup message with the calling party category in the call setup message set to a value that alerts a switch component for the call to drop the answer message from the announcement server component.

16. The method of claim 15, wherein the step of preventing the initiation of billing for the call upon receipt of the answer message from the announcement server component based on the call category comprises the step of:

determining to not update a billing record associated with the call for the answer  
5 message from the announcement server component based on the calling party category being set to the value.

17. The method of claim 13, wherein the step of preventing the initiation of billing for the call upon receipt of the answer message from the announcement server component based on the call category comprises the steps of:

10 checking the call category upon receipt of the answer message from the announcement server component; and

dropping the answer message if the call category is set to a value that indicates the call terminates at the announcement server component.

18. The method of claim 13, wherein the step of preventing the initiation of billing  
15 for the call upon receipt of the answer message from the announcement server component based on the call category comprises the steps of:

dropping the answer message from the announcement server component to prevent an initiation of billing for the call based on the answer message from the announcement server component; and

20 accepting an answer message from the called communication device to initiate the billing for the call upon receipt of the answer message from the called communication device.

19. The method of claim 13, wherein a calling communication device initiates the call to the called communication device, wherein the announcement server component comprises a customized ringback tone component;

wherein the step of setting the call category for the call to indicate that the call terminates at the announcement server component prior to connection with the called communication device comprises the steps of:

determining that the call meets one or more customized ringback tone criteria set by a user of the called communication device; and

setting the call category to indicate that the call terminates at the customized ringback tone component;

wherein the customized ringback tone component sends the answer message to the call control component and plays a preselected ringback tone to the calling communication device prior to answer by the called communication device;

wherein the step of preventing the initiation of billing for the call upon receipt of the answer message from the announcement server component based on the call category comprises the step of:

determining to not process the answer message to prevent billing for the call while the customized ringback tone component plays the preselected ringback tone to the calling communication device.

20. An article, comprising:

one or more computer-readable signal-bearing media;

means in the one or more media for setting a call category for a call to indicate that the call terminates at an announcement server component prior to connection with a called  
5 communication device; and

means in the one or more media for preventing an initiation of billing for the call upon receipt of an answer message from the announcement server component based on the call category.

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